

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Swine Flu-Related Death Confirmed in Wyoming

The first death of a state resident infected with the swine flu (novel H1N1) virus has been confirmed by Wyoming Department of Health officials.

The young adult female resident of Fremont County had an underlying health condition associated with higher risk of complications from influenza.

Dr. Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director and state health officer, offered his sympathy to the woman's family and friends. "We are, of course, saddened to hear of this young woman's passing."

"Most people who become ill with influenza are able to recover fully after a few days," Sherard said. "But, unfortunately, we know that every year with seasonal flu as well as with this new swine flu strain there are always a few situations when the illness can become a serious threat."

Flu symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches and fatigue. Some patients have also reported diarrhea and vomiting.

Sherard reminded Wyoming residents to be cautious about influenza in the coming months and recommended the following common-sense steps to help prevent the spread of illness:

- In general, people who develop influenza-like illness should stay home from work, school or travel until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever. Those who are severely ill (such as having trouble breathing) should seek medical care.
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water or the use of an alcohol-based hand gel.
- Covering noses and mouths with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing, and throwing used tissues in a trash can.
- Avoiding contact with ill persons.

A swine flu vaccine is not yet available in Wyoming but is expected later this fall. "We're asking everyone to stay tuned for future announcements about this new vaccine. We also want to make sure that people get their standard seasonal flu shots this year," Sherard said.

To date, 158 cases of swine flu among Wyoming residents have been reported to the department from 15 counties. "Swine flu has continued to circulate around the state throughout the summer and we expect that it's been present in every community," said Dr. Tracy Murphy, state epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health. "However, the level of flu activity has

been significantly lower over these last few months than what we see during a typical winter flu season.” The department has received reports of seven hospitalizations among Wyoming residents in connection with the virus.

Of the reported cases, 20 were reported from patients under the age of five, 63 cases were from patients age 5 to 18, 75 cases were from patients age 19-64 and no cases were from patients over 65. “These age ranges have been fairly consistent with what’s been happening with this virus in other states and countries,” Murphy said.

Counts provided by the department only reflect cases confirmed by specialized lab testing as the swine flu strain. The department expects the number of actual infections around the state to be much higher because many ill persons do not seek medical care or are not tested specifically for the swine flu strain.

More information about swine flu in Wyoming is available online at www.health.wyo.gov .

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